

Methodical instructions for ordering quarantine in schools and educational facilities in connection to COVID-19 disease

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Reference points

In the case of a laboratory-confirmed incidence of the COVID-19 disease among individuals at schools and educational facilities, the imposition of quarantine applies only to those persons who were in high-risk, epidemiologically relevant contact. The regional public health authority with local competence decides about this range of persons based on the performed epidemiological investigation. In its decision-making, it takes into account the duration and period of contact with the positive case, intensity of contact, mutual distance between persons, specific health issues of the positive person in the school environment, measures implemented at the given facility, use of protective respiratory equipment, disinfection of the hands, surfaces, etc. Every such case must be reviewed individually. Because the situation may differ based on a number of variable factors, such as the type and size of the school, age structure and medical impairments of the children/pupils/students, layout of the building (detached building, pavilions), spatial conditions at the school, number of children/pupils/students in the class, teaching regime, ventilation regime and method, classroom size, school dining system, stays in after-school and hobby clubs, sports and social activities and means of transport to school. The current local epidemiological situation may also vary. For these reasons, it is not possible to stipulate a universal procedure applicable to any situation and facility. Nevertheless, it is necessary to create certain common principles for ordering quarantine at these facilities, which can be applied in the regional public health authorities' decision-making.

This methodical handbook was drafted and approved by the MoH epidemiological group.

Definition of quarantine

Quarantine refers to the medical examination of a healthy individual, who has come into contact with a disease, and their segregation from other individuals in order to prevent the contagion of the infectious disease by this person during the contagion period. During the period of quarantine, the infectious diseases is either manifested/confirmed or not manifested/not confirmed in the quarantined person.

The definition pursuant to Section 2(7a) of Act No. 258/2000 Coll., on the Protection of Public Health, states: "(quarantine) refers to the segregation of a healthy individual, who came into contact with the infectious disease or was at the outbreak location during the incubation period (hereinafter a "suspected infected individual"), from other individuals and the medical examination of such an individual with the aim of preventing the transmission of the infectious disease during the period when this disease could spread."

Objective

The aim of this methodical instruction is to help the employees of regional public health authorities in decision-making processes when ordering quarantine at schools and educational facilities, or closing or restricting the operation of schools and educational facilities within the joint procedure according to the same principles throughout the Czech Republic.

Ordering quarantine

If the incidence of COVID-19 is confirmed at the school or educational facility, quarantine will be ordered for the child/pupil/student, teacher and other workers based on the following criteria.

Quarantine for children/pupils/students

This is only ordered in the **one entire class** where the contagion was confirmed, provided that:

- extensive and close contact (> 15 minutes at a distance of less than 2 m) was determined for all persons in the class with the positive child/pupil/student in this class in the period of two days before the contagion was confirmed or clinical symptoms appeared, and
- protective respiratory (nose and mouth) equipment (masks or a FFP2/N95 or higher class respirator) was not used in an adequate manner by all the persons in the class for the entire period of extensive and close contact with the positive individual in the period of two days before the contagion was confirmed or clinical symptoms appeared.

This is ordered for selected persons in multiple classes, if the contagion was confirmed in only one class, provided that:

- extensive mutual and close contact (> 15 minutes at a distance of less than 2 m) was determined between persons in these classes with a COVID-19 positive person from another class in the period of two days before the contagion was confirmed or clinical symptoms appeared, and
- protective respiratory (nose and mouth) equipment (masks or a FFP2/N95 class respirator) was not used in an adequate manner by all the persons in the given classes for the entire period of extensive and close contact with the positive individual in the period of two days before the contagion was confirmed or clinical symptoms appeared.

Quarantine need not be imposed on all the children/pupils/students of a class other than the class with the positive individual, but only on those who came into epidemiologically relevant contact and did not adequately use protective respiratory (nose and mouth) equipment.

At **after-school clubs or hobby clubs** conducted at the school, where the contagion was confirmed, quarantine will be ordered provided that:

- extensive mutual and close contact (> 15 minutes at a distance of less than 2 m) was determined for all persons in the club with the positive child/pupil/student in this club in the period of two days before the contagion was confirmed or clinical symptoms appeared, and
- protective respiratory (nose and mouth) equipment (masks or a FFP2/N95 class respirator) was not used in an adequate manner by all the persons in the club for the entire period of extensive and close contact in the period of two days before the contagion was confirmed or clinical symptoms appeared.

Quarantine need not be imposed on all children/pupils/students from another section of the after-school club or hobby club than the section or club with the positive individual, but only on those who came into epidemiologically relevant contact and did not adequately use protective respiratory (nose and mouth) equipment.

Quarantine for teaching staff and other employees of the school or educational facility

If the contagion is confirmed **in a given teacher's class**, the teacher will be ordered into quarantine provided that:

- extensive and close contact (> 15 minutes at a distance of less than 2 m) was determined between the teacher and the positive child/pupil/student in this class in the period of two days before the contagion was confirmed or clinical symptoms appeared, and

- protective respiratory (nose and mouth) equipment (masks or a FFP2/N95 class respirator) were not used in an adequate manner by the teacher for the entire period of extensive and close contact in the period of two days before the contagion was confirmed or clinical symptoms appeared.

Contact with a positive child/pupil/student may be considered more epidemiologically relevant for a teacher who teaches multiple lessons within one day in the given classroom than for a teacher who teaches e.g. only one lesson within one day in the classroom, where surfaces are cleaned more often with virucidal disinfectant, hands are regularly disinfected and intensive natural ventilation with fresh air is conducted regularly. The type of teaching and movement of the teacher about the classroom may also be taken into account.

If **contagion is confirmed in an employee of the school or educational facility**, quarantine will be ordered:

- for those employees of the school or educational facility for whom extensive mutual and close contact with the positive employee (> 15 minutes at a distance of less than 2 m) was determined in the period of two days before the contagion was confirmed or clinical symptoms appeared, and
- protective respiratory (nose and mouth) equipment (masks or a FFP2/N95 class respirator) were not used in an adequate manner by the employee and children/pupils/students for the entire period of extensive and close contact in the period of two days before the contagion was confirmed or clinical symptoms appeared.

If the employee of the school or educational facility for whom the COVID-19 contagion was confirmed used protective respiratory (nose and mouth) equipment (mask or FFP2/N95 respirator) throughout the entire period of contact in the period of two days before the confirmation of the contagion or appearance of clinical symptoms, quarantine need not be imposed, upon due consideration of the specific situation.

Ordering the closing or restricted operation of the school

If the incidence of COVID-19 is confirmed or quarantine is imposed at the school or educational facility for more than 30 percent of the teaching staff and children/pupils/students, preceded by a rising trend in the contagion rate, the risk of the presence of many possible sources of contagion and further transmission of the disease is so high that it is recommended to close or restrict operation of the school or educational facility (individual buildings or workplaces). Hence, it is even possible and justified to partially restrict the operation of the school or of a specific building if the school or school facility operates in multiple buildings.

In the aforementioned situation, the further operation of the entire school or school facility (building or workplace) would pose an excessive epidemiological risk and threat to public health. The decision to close the school or educational facility (building or workplace) is issued by the respective regional public health authority. In less severe cases or when operation of the school is impossible due to a lack of staff who are in quarantine, the regional public health authority with local competence will conduct an individual assessment and may recommend a different system for closing the school or educational facility (building or workplace) upon agreement with the school principal - the school proceeds pursuant to Section 24(2) or (3) of the Schools Act, respectively Section 3(2) of Decree No. 14/2005 Coll.